

Washington, DC— Today, Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23), a member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee and its Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs attended a hearing to move forward a bill he has cosponsored, HR 952 the COMBAT PTSD Act which stands for Compensation Owed for Mental Health Based on Activities in Theater Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Act. Later this week Rodriguez will hold a roundtable discussion with veterans and experts in San Antonio on the effects this and other upcoming bills will have on working to help soldiers and veterans.

“It has been the case in every war our country has fought that non-combat unit troops end up in combat,” said Rodriguez. “Our military service members and veterans should all be allowed to receive counseling and further designations without any stigma attached to their conditions. We owe it to our troops and their families to give back to them after they serve our country and if someone has PTSD they should be able to receive the care they need.”

The COMBAT PTSD Act will eliminate the prejudice that only certain troops will end up in combat and directly addresses stereotypes by assuming claims of our veterans may be directly connected to their service.

The current Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) system used for determining PTSD has resulted in veterans being denied their rightful claims. Claims can currently be denied based on the “improbability” of a member having served in the capacity they claim for several unjustifiable reasons including because they were female, they were not in a combat specific career field, they weren’t permanently assigned to the designated type of unit, they didn’t receive a specific award for their actions, or they weren’t listed properly in rosters.

No member of our military has to be in a physical fight or pull a trigger to have wounds from service. Many troops see the aftermath of a fight, or the resulting carnage, and develop PTSD without ever having been in combat. Troops also don’t have to be in a combat zone to develop PTSD. Military Sexual Trauma, war simulation training exercises, vehicle accidents on convoy training while in the United States, or any other traumatic event can result in PTSD. Veterans often don’t know they have PTSD or are in denial for years before it may become evident.

Last week Rodriguez met new VA Secretary Eric Shinseki at Audie Murphy VA Hospital in San Antonio to discuss this bill and a number of veterans issues Shinseki is now responsible for.

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